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by

Rhonda Nancy Taylor

December 2009

**The Report committee for Rhonda Nancy Taylor
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

Social Media Marketing: A New Era in the Pharmaceutical Industry

Approved by

Supervising Committee:

Michael Mackert

Brad Love

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by

Rhonda Nancy Taylor, B.A.

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Abstract
Social Media Marketing: A New Era in the Pharmaceutical Industry

by

Rhonda Nancy Taylor, M.A.

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SUPERVISOR: Michael Mackert

This paper seeks to understand how social media can be employed by pharmaceutical brands as an integral component of the marketing mix. Novo Nordisk will be used as an example to demonstrate the unsuccessful use of social media marketing. Similarly, Johnson & Johnson, Sanofi-Aventis and Bayer Didget will be used as examples to demonstrate the successful use of social media marketing. The framework necessary in the construction of a successful social media marketing campaign will be discussed, with each component receiving individual attention. This framework will be implemented in a hypothetical campaign for the pharmaceutical brand, Vytorin, to demonstrate the process.

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Introduction

The pharmaceutical industry is one of the most lucrative industries in the United States, and one that has experienced significant change over the past five years. This change however, has had little to do with the research and production of pharmaceuticals, and instead more to do with how pharmaceutical companies market their products.

Traditionally, pharmaceutical companies directly targeted doctors and healthcare providers with regard to their strategic marketing. These companies would “detail” doctors, with the average family doctor receiving 28 visits per week from pharmaceutical representatives.¹ During such visits, representatives would provide doctors with free information on all of their brands latest drugs and healthcare devices. With this practice, pharmaceutical companies spent approximately 86% of their budget marketing to doctors and healthcare providers each year.¹ This entailed spending an average of \$8, 290 per doctor per year. In contrast, these companies would spend only 14% of their budget marketing directly to consumers.¹ This approach, however, appears to be changing rapidly. With the “re-branding” of pharmaceuticals and diseases alike, patients are evolving into consumers at a fast pace.

The re-branding of Eli Lilly’s top selling anti-depressant Prozac, as Sarafem, serves as a good example. Mary Ebeling, a contributor on *PR Watch*, observes the re-branding of Prozac in her article “Beyond Advertising: The Pharmaceutical Industry’s Hidden Marketing Tactics.” Ebeling states that Prozac and Sarafem are chemically

¹ Ebeling, Mary. "Beyond Advertising: The Pharmaceutical Industry's Hidden Marketing Tactics." *PR Watch.org*. N.p., 21 Feb. 2008. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

identical, and that the only differences between the two drugs are branding and what each is prescribed for.¹ Prozac is used to treat the symptoms of depression, whilst Sarafem is used to treat the symptoms of premenstrual dysphoric disorder.¹ In her article, Ebeling describes how this came to be, “By going back to the FDA and getting approval to use Prozac to treat a new set of symptoms, Eli Lilly won big. The company now has two separate markets to sell to, and it stymied potential generic competitors to boot.”¹

Albeit, ethically questionable, the rebranding of such drugs is proving to be a highly effective marketing strategy for pharmaceutical companies.¹ Consumers see and hear very little about the rebranding of pharmaceutical products and for the most part are oblivious to the process. With regard to this, Ebeling writes, "insidious marketing campaigns seeking to rebrand medical conditions as lifestyle choices, and the patients who suffer from them as consumers, have received little scrutiny.”¹ Consequently, the door is left open for pharmaceutical giants to market their products directly to consumers, totally bypassing doctors and healthcare specialists. With new horizons in sight, these companies have naturally been seeking out new ways to do so.

In light of this, it is evident that social media would provide the necessary tools for pharmaceutical companies to market their products directly to consumers. There are numerous reasons as to why pharmaceutical companies should employ social media as a legitimate component of their marketing strategies. The most important reason however, is that today's consumer expects companies to have a presence in social media. According to a 2008 study by Cone, 60% of Americans use social media, and of those

surveyed, 59% interact with companies using social media websites.² Furthermore, 93% of social media users believe a company should have a presence in social media. Moreover, 85% of social media users believe that companies should not only have a presence in social media, but that there should be interaction between these two parties. It is therefore possible to infer that consumers are not only open to communicating with brands online, but they would prefer to. As a result, companies that fail to interact with their consumer base through social media are failing to meet the expectations of consumers. According to Mike Hollywood, Director of New Media for Cone, “the news here is that Americans are eager to deepen their brand relationships through social media ...it isn’t an intrusion into their lives, but rather a welcome channel for discussion.”²

Further to this, there has been a dramatic shift in the approach consumers take with regard to healthcare. Traditionally, healthcare information has only been accessible through healthcare professionals and medical books, both of which often carry large price tags. However, the Internet has made medical information far more accessible to consumers, irrespective of their location, income or age. Today, 80% of Internet consumers search online for health information, trusting peer-generated social media content more than their physicians, and pharmaceutical company websites.³ This is a trend that pharmaceutical companies can no longer afford to ignore. In order for brands to

² "Cone Finds that Americans Expect Companies to Have a Presence in Social Media." Editorial. *Cone*. N.p., 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

³ Maher, Michael. "Pharma Companies And Social Media Marketing." Editorial. *adotas*. N.p., 21 Jan. 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

engage consumers effectively, they must have an online presence beyond a typical product information website.

According to Michael Maher, a contributor on *Adotas*, an interactive advertising blog, marketing via social media can make pharmaceutical marketing a great deal more effective. In his article “Pharma Companies and Social Media Marketing,” Maher explains the concept behind this, stating that social media marketing creates better informed patients, who will make smarter choices, become more compliant, and advocate an effective treatment to their social contacts.³ Nonetheless, many pharmaceutical companies fear laws and regulations enforced by the FDA, and question if it is even possible to engage consumers via social media marketing without serious consequences. What many companies have failed to realize however, is that these laws and regulations do not restrict the channel of communication that pharmaceutical companies may use, simply the message. Maher comments on this issue in his article, stating, “the common belief is that there are too many regulatory hurdles around reporting adverse events... While it certainly isn’t as simple for pharma as it is for CPG, technology or entertainment marketers, many drug companies are beginning to use social media very effectively and there are easy ways to get started, requiring only small modifications to current regulatory processes.”³

Therefore, as the number of pharmaceutical companies choosing to employ social media marketing continues to increase, the ones that do not will be left behind, out of touch with consumers. Among the companies already employing social media in their marketing strategies are Johnson & Johnson with *J&J BTW*, Sanofi-Aventis with Sanofi-Aventis.TV, and Bayer Diabetes Care with Bayer Didget. These companies are to serve

as examples of successful social media campaigns for the purpose of this study. There are, however, companies whose social media efforts have failed to achieve the desired outcome; Novo Nordisk and the Charlie Kimball Twitter account will serve as an example here.

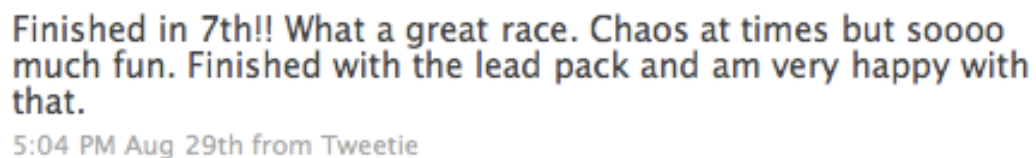
The Unsuccessful Campaign

Novo Nordisk

In 2009, Novo Nordisk announced the official launch of its *Race with Insulin* Twitter page. This effort was the latest development in the company's 2009 partnership with Firestone Indy Lights racecar driver, and diabetic, Charlie Kimball. According to a press release on Kimball's official website, "the first American open-wheeled racing driver with diabetes will provide updates called 'tweets' directly from his computer or mobile phone about his race progress and diabetes management, representing a different direction in sharing real patient experiences."⁴ Commenting on his involvement with Novo Nordisk, Kimball writes on the same website, "When I am not traveling at speeds of 160 miles per hour, I hope to reach as many people living with diabetes as possible with my own story and inspire them to take an active role in managing their health."⁴

The Campaign

Upon observation of *Race with Insulin*, it appears that Kimball has stayed true to his word, with multiple daily Tweets tracking his life. For example:

A screenshot of a Twitter post. The text of the tweet is "Finished in 7th!! What a great race. Chaos at times but soooo much fun. Finished with the lead pack and am very happy with that." Below the text, it says "5:04 PM Aug 29th from Tweetie".

Finished in 7th!! What a great race. Chaos at times but soooo much fun. Finished with the lead pack and am very happy with that.
5:04 PM Aug 29th from Tweetie

Fig. 1 - Racewithinsulin. Online posting. *Twitter*. Novo Nordisk, 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009. <<http://twitter.com/racewithinsulin>>.

⁴ Charlie Kimball. N.p., 7 July 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

This appears to be a smart move for Novo Nordisk; Kimball, an inspirational figure, is sharing personal experiences of not only life as a world-class racecar driver, but also of life with diabetes. By sponsoring such efforts, Novo Nordisk conveys the message that it cares deeply about the daily struggles of its consumers, and of all those living with diabetes. However, many of Kimball's Tweets also make reference to Levemir and NovoLog, Novo Nordisk's prescription medications, which questions the legitimacy of such Tweets. If a single Tweet appears to have been manipulated by the brand's marketing team, it suggests that the rest may also be inauthentic. For example:



Fig. 2 - Racewithinsulin. Online posting. *Twitter*. Novo Nordisk, 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009. <<http://twitter.com/racewithinsulin>>.

This Tweet, in addition to many others, elicited suspicious responses from not only Kimball followers, but from pharmaceutical marketing experts, too. John Mack, author of *Pharma Marketing Blog* writes, "The Levemir Tweet, to me, just seems like a sleazy way of...mentioning the product name! It's not enough that the name is all over Kimball's race suit and car, he also has to mention it every once in a while in his Tweets?"⁵ By marketing its products in such a way, Novo Nordisk give the impression that it has a subversive agenda.

⁵ Mack, John. "Novo Nordisk Selectively Copies & Edits Kimball's Tweets." *Pharma Marketing Blog*. N.p., 22 June 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

Nevertheless, upon first glance of *Race with Insulin*, Kimball's tweets appear authentic, with short anecdotal updates of his daily life. It also appears that Kimball's sporadic name-dropping of Novo Nordisk prescription medications is his only warranted criticism. However, with very little research, it is easy to discover that Kimball has a second Twitter account, *Charlie Kimball*. Upon comparison of the two pages, patterns are instantly detectable. There is an almost one-to-one mapping of Tweets between the two accounts, with only subtle differences:

@charliekimball: "Finished 7th. Made contact with Pippa Mann halfway through after she was a lap or two off the lead. Happy with the result and the points!"⁶

Becomes:

@racewithinsulin: "Finished 7th. Very pleased with the result. It was great racing under the lights! Headed back home to California tomorrow."⁷

Mack, also observing this pattern wrote, "It appears that someone is selecting a sample of Charlie's authentic tweets made @charliekimball, editing them, and adding branded messages to them when necessary. Is this any way for a pharma brand to carry on an authentic conversation?"⁵

⁶ "charliekimball." *Twitter*. N.p., 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

⁷ Racewithinsulin. Online posting. *Twitter*. Novo Nordisk, 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

In asking this question, Mack has honed in on the underlying issue here. It is not that Kimball has multiple Twitter accounts; many users of social media maintain multiple accounts as a means of communicating more directly with different groups of people. The issue also has little to do with Kimball's Levemir endorsing posts. As a Novo Nordisk sponsored page, this is to be expected. The fundamental issue here is dishonesty. Followers of *Race with Insulin* do so with the expectation that they are receiving authentic updates of a person's life, and more importantly, how this person deals with diabetes on a daily basis. Commenting further, Mack writes, "Charlie Kimball's Tweets would be much more interesting if he stopped posting about cleaning his race suit, taking Levemir, etc, and told us a little bit about how he FEELS being a race car driver with Diabetes, how he deals with the unique problems his medical condition gives him... THAT would be truly inspirational!"⁵

Novo Nordisk has misunderstood the purpose of social media in this context. The real challenge for pharmaceutical companies is to make personal connections with consumers via social media, as opposed to finding new ways to advertise products.⁵ Using new media, Novo Nordisk has an opportunity to develop relationships with consumers, as well as observe and learn from their individual experiences. In a well-nurtured environment, Novo Nordisk could potentially create a community where people have shared interests and concerns. Central to this however, is trust, the key component Novo Nordisk have overlooked. By building trust with consumers in an authentic, non-marketing manner, Novo Nordisk could raise consumer awareness of its brand as a caring

and worthwhile entity. As a result, interest in the brand's products would have the potential to grow in an organic way.

Successful Social Media Campaigns

Johnson & Johnson

In 2007, Johnson & Johnson launched the second phase of its Web 2.0 strategy, *J&J BTW: a three dimensional view of Johnson & Johnson*, a corporate blog authored by Marc Monseau, Director of Corporate Communications for Social Media at J&J. The blog promises to be a voice for the company, conveying this message to its viewers, “I will try and find a voice that gets lost in formal communications... We’re going to do what we can to talk openly, directly and to the best of our knowledge.”⁸ With regards to why J&J have chosen to embark on this venture, Monseau says the following, “Everyone else is talking about our company, so why can’t we?”⁸ Here, it is possible to note that J&J have chosen to be proactive, as opposed to reactive, with regards to its brand image in the realm of social media. In a recent interview, Monseau spoke about *J&J BTW*, and how it came to be, stating:

About two and a half years ago, we recognized that there was this growing influence of the blogosphere and the lack of trust and credibility, and more stilled, carefully framed messages coming from companies, institutions and organizations. We realized that we needed to one, understand this space a little better and two, try to get some experience with joining in some of the

⁸ Monseau, Marc. "ABOUT JNJ BTW." *JNJ BTW*. N.p., 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

conversations that we knew were taking place about our company and our products online.⁹

In stating this, Monseau has to some extent communicated what users' expectations for the blog should be; J&J simply want to join in the ongoing conversations about its brand and products. Whether J&J anticipated the moderation of these conversations is unknown, but knowing what the company's intentions were makes it possible to better judge its performance.

The Campaign

J&J BTW is essentially a collection of articles ranging in topic from disease specific content and company news to human-interest stories and industry developments. The latest entries, for example, include "Language shouldn't be a barrier to Diabetes education," followed by "Distracted drivers in school zones as dangerous as drunk drivers." This content corresponds to a description, penned by Monseau, on the blog describing what the site would provide for its users, "On J&J, there will be talk about J&J – what we're doing, how we're doing it and why. There will be comment on the news about our company and the industry."⁸

To the right of the entries is a large content list, allowing users to find previous entries according to specific categories. Some of these categories include "Blood Donation," "Childhood Safety," "Health 2.0," "Medical Trials," "Health Coverage," "Mommy Vloggers" and "Health and Wellness." In addition to this, users are able to

⁹ Senak, Mark. "J&J and Social Media - How'd They Do It? A Conversation with J&J." *eye on fda*. N.p., 4 Feb. 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

comment on entries and a small tab informs users as to how many comments there currently are. There is an RSS Feed, as well as individual feeds for posting entries to four of the largest social networking sites; del.icio.us, Digg, Facebook and Twitter. This allows users to share J&J stories with consumers who are not active users of *J&J BTW*, creating awareness of the site. In addition to this, the blog contains an easily accessible archive of past entries, providing users with an extensive library for their preferred topics. The blog also boasts a blogroll, listing useful sources related to health and the pharmaceutical industry, most of which are unrelated to J&J.

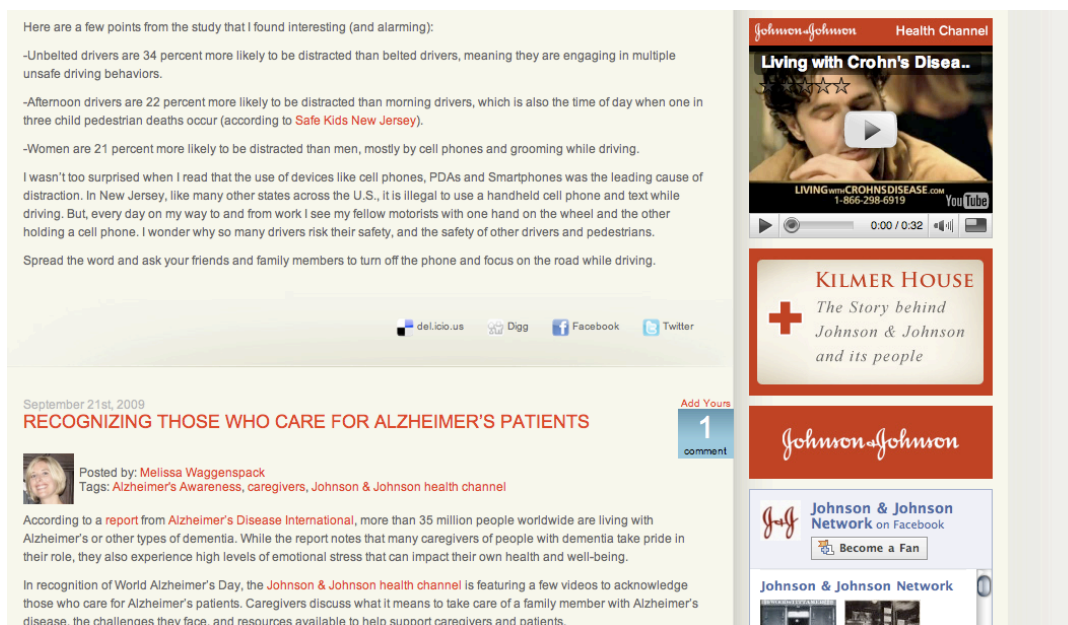


Fig. 3 - Monseau, Marc. "ABOUT JNJ BTW." *JNJ BTW*. N.p., 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009. <http://jnjbtw.com/about-jnj-btw/>.

Further to this, the blog has an interactive list of J&J's other social media tools. The site features a J&J Twitter feed; a J&J Facebook link, allowing users to join the fan club; a link to *Kilmer House*, J&J's first blog that documents the story behind the company and its people; and a space for J&J's *Health Channel* on YouTube with a video

that users can instantly play. The video currently displayed is “Living with Crohns Disease.”

Success

There are two ways to measure the success of *J&J BTW*, using either quantitative or qualitative information. However, quantitative data in this case is scarce, with only the number of entry comments pertaining to the success of the blog. Therefore, it is necessary to rely heavily upon secondary data, such as trade press and consumer blogs, to determine the success of *J&J BTW*. Entry comments will also be viewed in order to establish consumer response to the blog.

With regard to user comments on *J&J BTW*, the majority of posts have received at least one, with some entries receiving as many as twenty. The example below, an entry titled, “So what’s with the new look?” includes thirteen comments.

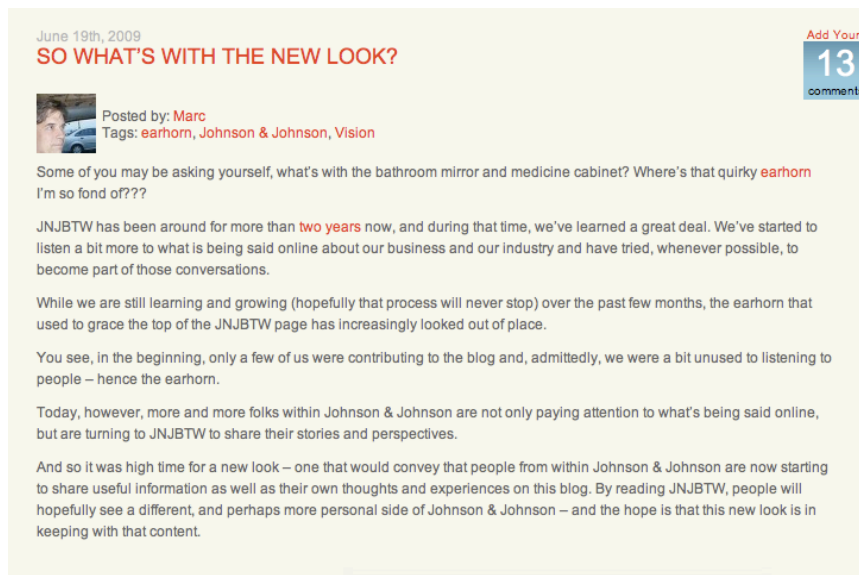


Fig. 4 - Monseau, Marc. "ABOUT JNJ BTW." *JNJ BTW*. N.p., 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009. <<http://jnjbtcw.com/about-jnj-btcw/>>.

Although thirteen comments may not appear that large a number when compared to the number of comments on larger blogs or social networking sites, this is a significant feat for J&J. As a brand-specific pharmaceutical blog, *J&J BTW* should naturally expect less traffic than other, more general blogs or social media vehicles. Nonetheless, these 13 comments are sufficient enough for *J&J BTW* to establish a community, which will inevitably lead to an increase in user comments in the future. In addition to this, JD Lasica reported in his recent presentation “Social media: opportunities for pharma,” that since 2007 there have been hundreds of reader comments on *J&J BTW*, with zero reported adverse events.¹⁰ Furthermore, by allowing users to share the articles beyond *J&J BTW*, J&J are helping to generate more extensive conversations on social networks that are already established and highly active.

With regard to secondary data, *J&J BTW* has received a significant amount of attention from both the advertising and pharmaceutical industries, as well as consumers. Not only has the blog received recognition, it has been praised for a variety of reasons. According to Ron Ploof, author of the new e-book *Johnson & Johnson Does New Media: Lessons from a 123 year old, \$64 Billion New Media Innovator*, J&J has achieved what it intended with *J&J BTW*. In his book, Ploof writes, “JNJ has become what it set out to be, a place where the company can join the online conversation about a subject that it knows lots about...Johnson & Johnson.”¹¹ This highlights the importance of J&J outlining its

¹⁰ Lasica, JD. "Social media: opportunities for pharma." *slideshare*. N.p., Oct. 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

¹¹ Ploof, Ron. *Johnson & Johnson Does New Media: Lessons from a 123 year old, \$64 Billion New Media Innovator*. N.p., 15 June 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

intentions with regard to the blog, and how it has provided critics with very little room to criticize the site.

Ploof also comments on various functions of *J&J BTW*. With regard to the site's blogroll (which lists sources unrelated to J&J), Ploof commends J&J for appearing to put users before company gain. He suggests that J&J is simply taking a page out of its history of public education by linking to other blogs that also share information about health and human welfare.¹¹ This is where J&J has succeeded tremendously. By placing the wants and needs of consumers ahead of company gain, J&J presents itself as caring and selfless brand. Not only is this important given the nature of J&J products, but it also builds a high degree of trust with consumers.

J&J BTW has also been praised for its transparency and tone. An entry on pharmaceutical blog *Eye on FDA*, "J&J and Social Media - How'd They Do It? A Conversation with J&J," received a user comment that said the following, "JNJ BTW helps them appear to be more transparent than your traditional Pharma brand...I work for a Pharma advertising agency and I wish more companies could appreciate that bravery here can result in important benefits to the company's overall brand."⁹ Not only is J&J being commended for its social media strategy, the company has also been recognized for its willingness to push forward and tread new ground. This is important as it portrays J&J as an innovative company, complementing its brand image.

Commenting on the tone of *J&J BTW* is Deborah Dick-Rath, author of *Changing*, an article about social media, and new marketing for pharmaceutical companies and healthcare providers. She writes, "Although *J&J BTW* is full of corporate and industry

information, it tries to maintain a voice rather than lapsing into “corporate speak.” This helps create a feeling of trust among its readers.”¹² Again, J&J is commended for its efforts toward building relationships and trust with consumers, something that is often difficult to achieve in the pharmaceutical industry. By communicating with consumers openly, without hiding behind industry jargon and marketing ploys, J&J have been able to start an honest dialogue, which was one of the company’s initial objectives.

J&J BTW has also been used for additional purposes by J&J, tackling some of the more urgent communication problems that the company encounters. In response to a J&J marketing effort gone wrong, Kathy Widmer, Vice President of marketing for McNeil Consumer Healthcare, used the blog to apologize to those offended by a tongue-in-cheek marketing effort called “Motrin Moms.”¹¹ According to Ploof, who makes several references to the occurrence, “Widmer’s blogpost addressed the problem head on, made no excuses, and detailed a step-by-step plan for how the company would rectify the situation.”¹¹ This denotes the usefulness of *J&J BTW* to communicate with consumers instantly about anything it so wishes. It also demonstrates how J&J are using honesty and accountability as ways to further build trust with its consumers.

Fundamentally however, who better to ask than Monseau himself about the success of *J&J BTW*. In a recent interview, Monseau commented on what both he and J&J have been able to learn as a result of the blog. He states that the blog has allowed him to learn a great deal about J&J’s consumers, as well as the company’s own voice. Monseau also notes that there have been unexpected benefits to blogging, with new relationships emerging, and the evolution of new learning.¹² *J&J BTW* has enabled J&J to

¹² Dick-Rath, Deborah. *Changing*. N.p., Aug. 2008. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

build relationships with consumers that the company may not have otherwise been able to reach. This has provided the company with new insight into the feelings and opinions of consumers, with regard to a range of healthcare topics.

Sanofi-Aventis

In May 2009, Sanofi-Aventis launched Sanofi-Aventis.TV, an interactive video news website. The site is part of a new global strategy to increase transparency and understanding of the pharmaceutical company's operations. The site is an extension of the central Sanofi-Aventis website, as well as part of a companywide initiative to transform Sanofi-Aventis into a global healthcare leader.¹³ Geoffroy Bessaud, Senior Director for Sanofi-Aventis media relations and corporate communications commented on the company's new global strategy, stating, "We are setting up new tools for communicating, either within the company or outside of the company."¹³ Sanofi-Aventis.TV is the latest and most significant of these new communication tools, with six themed channels to reach the company's different audiences, which includes patients, healthcare professionals, employees, shareholders and the media. According to Bessaud, "We really want to open a window into the group and we want to start a dialogue with our many audiences. We want to provide prospective on the company's missions as well as on strategic directions."¹³

The Campaign

The first channel, "Spotlight", provides content regarding the company's current position, its goals and ongoing developments – or rather, all things business related. Some of the videos include "The New Strategy," "The Main Strengths of Pharmaceutical Operations" and "Sanofi-Aventis R&D: Next Steps." On the second channel, "Our Expertise," users can learn about research and development of Sanofi-Aventis

¹³ Lee, Jaimy. "Sanofi-Aventis launches global video news site ." *PR Week*. N.p., 21 May 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

pharmaceuticals, as well as some of the manufacturing processes. Some of the videos include “The Medicine: From its discovery to its launch to the market” and “Safety of Persons and Property.” This particular channel also provides content regarding specialized Sanofi-Aventis projects around the world, for example, “The Cancer Discovery Research.”



Fig. 5 - *Sanofi-aventis.tv*. Sanofi-Aventis, 2009. Web. 14 Nov. 2009.
<<http://www.sanofi-aventis.tv/home/index.php>>.

The third channel, “Around the World,” provides country specific content, such as “Sanofi-Aventis in Italy” and “Sanofi-Aventis in Ghana.” This channel also includes various videos providing a global overview of healthcare issues and current epidemics. Here, users can also find videos specific to Sanofi-Aventis’ individual response to global illnesses, for example, “Epidemik: An infectious exhibition.” The fourth channel, “Your Health,” consists of six sub-channels. These include “First Aid Actions,” “Infectious Diseases,” “Rhythm Disorders,” “Cancers,” “Vaccines” and “Lifestyle.” Amongst these

channels, users can find a vast assortment of videos from “Dengue Fever: an under-diagnosed disease” to “Sanofi-Pasteur: create vaccines to protect human life.” The “Lifestyle” sub-channel provides the most content with videos from weight loss and phobias to self-examinations and fitness. These include, but are not limited to, “Listening to your body: Tai Chi” and “Back pain? The right position to move.”

The fifth channel, “Solidarity,” focuses on social responsibility and Sanofi-Aventis’ humanitarian efforts. Videos include “Fight Cancer in Honduras and Tanzania,” and “TB Free: fight Tuberculosis.” The sixth and last channel, “Working for the People,” provides a mixture of ethics, general issues surrounding the pharmaceutical industry, as well as social responsibility regarding healthcare on a global scale. Videos include titles such as “Our children Matter,” “Counterfeiting: a danger to public health,” and “Handicap: listen to them.”

In addition to these six channels, Sanofi-Aventis.TV boasts a number of useful Web 2.0 elements; the site allows users to share and vote for videos they like, as well as sign up to the RSS channel feeds. Although the site does not yet offer users the option to comment on videos, or upload their own, the site does encourage users to e-mail their expectations of the site to the company. In its current state, Sanofi-Aventis.TV is updated regularly with new videos and is available in two languages with the promise of more to come.

Your expectations

Last name: Your age:

First name: Your country:

Gender*: ☐ female ☐ male Your Profile*:

Your email*:

What are your expectations about Sanofi-aventis TV ?*

*Indicates required field.

Privacy policy:
 Sanofi-aventis is committed to protecting the privacy of visitors. Your email and its content will be used to provide you with an answer to your message and to make some statistics. We will not send you any unsolicited materials. You have the possibility to access, to modify, to rectify and to suppress any personal data concerning you. For more information we invite you to visit our legal notice or to contact: webmaster@sanofi-aventis.tv

Fig. 6 - *Sanofi-aventis.tv*. Sanofi-Aventis, 2009. Web. 14 Nov. 2009.
 <<http://www.sanofi-aventis.tv/home/index.php>>.

Success

It can be very difficult to determine the success or overarching impact of an online resource such as Sanofi-Aventis.TV. However, according to one online source, Sanofi-Aventis.TV receives an estimated 653 visits per day. There are also 438 Google links that either mention Sanofi-Avetis.TV or contain links directly to it.¹⁴ However, although this information is useful, it is not necessarily the best way to measure the success of Sanofi-Aventis.TV. In this particular instance, observing trade press, as well as online commentary and critique is the most effective method of measuring the website's success. By doing so it is possible to gage how well Sanofi-Aventis.TV has been received by consumers, the pharmaceutical industry, and marketing professionals alike. It also provides some indication as to the website's future growth.

¹⁴ *statbrain*. N.p., 2008. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

Upon review of many online sources, it is evident that Sanofi-Aventis.TV has been universally well received. Making headlines on several leading pharmaceutical and marketing publications, Sanofi-Aventis.TV has been praised for many of its components ranging from its original content and diverse reach, to its transparency and honest approach to healthcare marketing. Sanofi-Aventis.TV has been repeatedly praised for “thinking outside the box” and creating a platform that offers more than many other social media sites that simply allow users to communicate with one another. Echoing this is an entry on *Beaker’s Blog*, a blog about the life sciences industry, which reads, “while other leading companies are just experimenting with Twitter, blogging and other forms of social media, Sanofi-Aventis has officially raised the stakes by taking their online presence to another level.”¹⁵ By staying ahead of the competition, Sanofi-Aventis has been able to portray their brand as innovative and cutting-edge – desirable qualities in the pharmaceutical industry.

In addition to this, Sanofi-Aventis.TV has been praised for its varied and original content, as well as its attempt to attract diverse audiences. An entry on *Med 2.0*, a blog dedicated to pharmaceutical marketing, reads, “...they haven’t just focused on a single topic, such as patient testimonials, brand promotion, corporate announcements/interviews, recruiting videos, etc. But instead, they chose to associate their overall corporate brand with all of these types of information.”¹⁶ In doing so, Sanofi-Aventis has been able to broaden its appeal, moving the company one step closer to

¹⁵ "Bienvenue Sanofi-Aventis.tv." *Beaker's Blog*. Vistek, 30 May 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

¹⁶ Shwen. "GSK Launches Corporate Blog and Sanofi Launches Sanofi-Aventis TV ." *med 2.0*. N.p., 16 June 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

becoming a global healthcare brand. Moreover, the nature of the videos is such that it allows Sanofi-Aventis to convey its core values in a humanistic manner, portraying the brand as a caring entity. Praising Sanofi-Aventis for its fresh attempt to convey company values is Daniel Ghinn, a contributor on *Creative Interactive*, who says “It’s not news; you would not expect to see a press release about the everyday experience of the company’s workforce. But it communicates powerful messages about Sanofi-Aventis’ values. Words like ‘make a difference,’ ‘the lives of others,’ ‘listener,’ ‘communicate,’ ‘respect,’ ‘dignity,’ ‘ethical,’ ‘responsibilities,’ are all captured in (an employers) words.”¹⁷ Here, Ghinn describes the purpose of Sanofi-Aventis.TV, exactly what it *is* and is not supposed to be. He also observes how the words of employees and patients contribute to shaping the brand’s image. The site provides more than news updates on company developments; it is supposed to provide real insight into the processes and people that represent Sanofi-Aventis’ core values.

With regard to audience participation, Ghinn also had the following to say, “Described by Sanofi-Aventis as ‘A window on our company,’ the format is certainly likely to engage a much broader range of stakeholders than traditional pharmaceutical communications and press releases.”¹⁷ Evidently, this has been a smart move for Sanofi-Aventis; by appealing to all of its audiences through one medium, the company gives the impression that it cares equally about these groups, as the quality of content provided for patients is the same as the content provided for healthcare professionals.

¹⁷ Ghinn, Daniel. "Sanofi-aventis.TV breathes life into pharmaceutical communications." Editorial. *creation interactive*. N.p., 17 July 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

Sanofi-Aventis.TV has also been praised most notably for the transparency of its website and its efforts to increase understanding of the company's operations across the world. Again reporting on Sanofi-Aventis.TV is *Med 2.0*, with an entry that reads, "I think SA.TV is a way for the public to get a better understanding of what Sanofi-Aventis is all about and the wide array of activities that drug companies — like Sanofi — are involved with. It's like a 'behind the scenes' documentary that provides a different perspective to what is being portrayed and perceived publicly."¹⁶ This strategy has undoubtedly been successful for Sanofi-Aventis. By adopting such transparency, Sanofi-Aventis is able to literally show audiences exactly what it is involved in, how many projects it is running simultaneously, as well as the progression of these projects over time. This is also the most effective way for the company to illustrate the sheer size of its operations. Similarly, by adopting a sense of openness, the company is able to create relationships and build trust with both consumers and observers alike, which will have a positive affect on its long-term brand image.

Bayer Didget

In July 2009 Bayer Diabetes Care (UK & Ireland) released the first and only blood glucose meter specifically designed for the needs of children suffering from Type 1 diabetes. Intended for children aged five to 14, the device connects directly to Nintendo DS and Nintendo Lite Gaming Systems. According to the Bayer Didget Official Website, Paul Wessel, the parent of a child with Type 1 diabetes, initially developed the Didget. Whilst working as Director of Marketing for Banner Engineering, Wessel became concerned with the control of his son's diabetes, a condition requiring several glucose measurements per day. Under "Product Information," the site reads, "Paul noticed that although his son Luke was constantly losing his blood glucose meter, he could always find his Nintendo™ Game Boy."¹⁸ Wessel believed that in this day and age, there had to be a way for his son to test his blood glucose in a fun and non-threatening manner. In an interview, Wessel was reported to have said, "Why not combine the two devices into one?"¹⁹ As a result, the Bayer Didget was developed, and Wessel became Sr. Director of New Product Development for Bayer HealthCare Diabetes Care.

The Campaign

The Bayer Didget is modeled off of Bayer's Contour Meter and features a sleek design that some have described as reminiscent of the Apple iPod.¹⁹ According to the Bayer Didget Website, the Didget converts test results into rewards points that children

¹⁸ "PRODUCT INFORMATION." *Bayer Didget*. Bayer Health Care, 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

¹⁹ "The Bayer Didget: Diabetes Meter for Gamers." *Kru*. N.p., 26 July 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

can use to unlock new game levels and buy in-game items. The system includes “Knock ‘Em Down: Worlds Fair” Video Game Arcade for use with the Nintendo DS and DS Lite. The Didget rewards system is intended to encourage consistent testing, and assist in the development of effective diabetes management. Additional bonus points may also be earned when children consistently test their blood glucose three times a day, everyday for at least one week and up to ninety days.

The device also has customizable settings, offering users two different modes, “Basic” and “Advanced,” for children to grow into.¹⁸ The “Basic” mode offers “Fast 5-second test time,” “14-day average,” “7-day HI/LO Summary” and “480 test result memory.” The “Advanced” mode offers all of these elements, in addition to the following; easy personalization of HI/LO blood glucose target range setting; HI/LO test result summary that shows tests above and below your child’s glucose target level; pre- and post-meal markers that help children quickly identify tests taken before and after eating; selectable post-meal reminders that can help children remember to test after meals at a time that works for their routine; and seven-, 14- and 30-day averages.

In addition to the games, the system also boasts an online social network, *Bayer Didget World*, designed solely for Didget users. This password protected site is intended to be a web community where Didget users can further redeem their points by customizing their page and unlocking mini-games. Once Didget users have registered with *Bayer Didget World*, they are invited to join *Bayer Around U* support program. Some of the benefits include access to Bayer Diabetes Support, staffed by qualified nurses; free record diaries, batteries and quality control solutions for life; a range of

information about living with diabetes; and choice of free, funky stickers to customize one's meter and slide cover.²⁰



Fig. 7 - *Bayer Didget*. Bayer Health Care, 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.
<<http://www.bayerdidget.co.uk/About-Didget/Product-Information>>.

Success

One of the most important aspects of the Bayer Didget is the story of its origins, which has been used extensively in the promotion of the device. The Bayer Didget was initially designed by a parent, the father of a child suffering with Type 1 diabetes, whose intentions are therefore, automatically regarded as positive. This gives parents something that they can relate to, making the device more appealing. The story also provides users and observers with a caring image of the Bayer Didget system, whereby the people behind it are more concerned with its consumers health and well being than with sales. As this is stated on the Bayer Didget Website, it subtly implies to parents that the health of their child is the company's primary goal, and that financial reward is a secondary objective. Additionally, £5.00 from the sale of every Didget is donated to the Juvenile

²⁰ "PRODUCT SUPPORT." *Bayer Didget*. Bayer HealthCare, 2009. Web. 10 Nov. 2009.

Diabetes Research Foundation, demonstrating how committed Bayer is to the treatment and cure of this disease.²¹ All of these elements have made the Didget more personable and therefore very favorable amongst parents engaged in online communities.

The Bayer Didget has also received an enormous amount of attention because it is the first blood glucose meter designed specifically for children. Additionally, it is the first glucose monitor to incorporate testing, gaming and social media. Head of Bayer Medical Care, Sandra Peterson, has expressed her excitement over the Didget saying, “The Didget Meter is a revolutionary development in healthcare management. Up until now, blood glucose monitors have been created with adults in mind.”²² Bayer has recognized that the needs of children are very different to the needs of adults and should consequently be approached in light of this. The Didget allows children to manage their own health and communicate with others in similar situations, whilst also rewarding their efforts with pure fun. John Gregory, Professor in pediatric endocrinology at Wales School of Medicine, Cardiff University, also commended Bayer for its efforts saying, “the Didget could ease the tension between parent and child that testing created by adding an element of fun and rewards to the routine...Because it is designed with children in mind, Bayer’s DIDGET meter can transform a child’s blood glucose testing experience from something they have to do into something they want to do.”²³ The key word here is experience; Bayer has recognized that a positive testing experience is the catalyst for consistent

²¹ "HOW TO BUY." *Bayer Didget*. Bayer HealthCare, 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

²² "First blood glucose designed especially for children ." *BAYNEWS*. Bayer, 28 Sept. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

²³ Barr, Fiona. "Nintendo DS to offer diabetes care ." *E-Health Insider*. N.p., 22 July 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

monitoring of blood glucose and should ultimately lead to the development of effective diabetes management. Bayer has achieved this experience by combining three separate experiences into one; testing and the light-hearted nature of gaming and social media.

Echoing this sentiment and further praising Bayer is Kruse, who believes the following, “Designing and marketing an effective glucose reader is merely the first step; convincing a child to actually maintain a regular testing schedule is another.”¹⁹ Kruse recognizes that through the use of technology and marketing, Bayer has successfully provided consumers with a way to improve their lives with social media at the forefront. Furthermore, Kruse observes, “Far from the days of badgering young patients into paying even the most cursory attention to their readings, Bayer and Wessel count on kids being so engaged that they run the risk of over-testing. In fact, a maximum limit of readings per day is programmed into the game.”¹⁹ Ultimately, it is difficult to find fault with a company that strives to improve the lives of diabetic children.

With regard to how successful the Bayer Didget has been, it is not yet possible to confirm how many Didgets have been sold, and thus, the number of children interacting on *Bayer Didget World* is unknown. However, it is possible to access the product’s success in terms of industry buzz, as well as the amount of attention the Didget has been awarded in both trade press and the blogosphere. Due to the nature of the product, it has received praise from the healthcare and marketing industries, as well as from the parenting community. What is evident from various online sources is that each of these markets is commending the Didget for different reasons, each specific to its own purpose - something of great value to Bayer. These commendations will be discussed, in turn, below.

Essentially, Bayer is offering children a way to improve their lives through the combined use of technology and most importantly, social media. To date, social media has, for the most part, proved to be nothing more than an appendage to advertising and consumer research in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries. Most companies that have incorporated social media into their communication strategies have done so as an add-on. Enter the Bayer Didget. The Bayer Didget is the perfect example of social media actually being built into the marketing mix, as opposed to being an after-thought. Consumers are literally paying for social media as part of their treatment.

Bayer has been recognized for their innovative approach in this area. Bob Gilbreath, author of *Marketing with Meaning*, a blog dedicated to marketing innovations, believes, “Anything that makes it easier – and even fun – for children to manage their diabetes is a huge opportunity to improve lives through marketing.”²⁴ Gilbreath observes that there is an opportunity to integrate different elements of marketing with technology (and beyond) to create something that is more effective than the sum of its parts. Moreover, Gilbreath believes that social media should be part of the solution, not an accessory to it.

From this it is evident that Bayer has achieved a great deal more than providing young diabetics with a fun way to manage their condition; it has molded a new healthcare approach, one that includes social media. Recognizing its own triumph, Bayer made an announcement to this effect on *BAYNEWS*, Bayer’s online news server, “Building on 40 years of experience, the company is now transforming how kids engage in their diabetes

²⁴ Gilbreath, Bob. "Bayer Creates Nintendo Game for Diabetes." *marketing with meaning*. N.p., 24 July 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

management.”²² Bayer is not the only company or person to have recognized this. Andre Blackman, a contributor to *healthGAMERS*, a blog dedicated to educating people about the possibilities of integrating health and gaming, states the following, “Innovation springs forth due to a need to connect and reinforce value – which is not always easy with kids. Kudos to you Bayer and Nintendo for getting this in the works.”²⁵ The Bayer Didget has helped to position Bayer as a leader in innovation across several industries – healthcare, pharmaceuticals, marketing and gaming. Remaining cutting edge is vital in the pharmaceutical industry, as is creating buzz in social media, both of which Bayer has achieved. As a result, the Bayer Didget can only have a positive effect on Bayer’s brand image.

In addition to this, Bayer has opened the door to the future, setting new standards in pharmaceutical marketing. Kevin Kruse, author of KruResearch, a blog dedicated to e-patients and Health 2.0, believes that the Bayer Didget “offers a glimpse into the future of health devices that are mobile, social and drive motivation.”¹⁹ The idea of driving motivation is an important one. Bayer has not only motivated young diabetics to manage their condition more effectively, but continues to be a driving force behind motivating other companies to deliver more effective healthcare tools. Commenting further on the Bayer Didget is Gilbreath, “I would be interested to see the company commission and share research showing that this device is helping kids learn to test regularly. This could help drive other healthcare companies into a new way of encouraging education, testing, and treatment by making it more fun for children of all ages.”²⁴ Bayer is proving to be a

²⁵ Blackman, Andre. "DIDGET: Nintendo and Diabetes Management." *healthGAMERS*. N.p., 23 July 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

driving force behind motivating people to better manage their health, as well as motivating pharmaceutical companies to provide people with tools to do so.

Building Blocks of a Successful Campaign

Purpose & Goals

Before a brand embarks on a social media marketing campaign, it must first determine the purpose of the campaign, as well as any specific objectives. The purpose may be product development, consumer service and support, or research, but a brand must establish this before it determines anything else. This will enable brands to map out the goals and objectives for the whole marketing strategy. Furthermore, a brand must be aware of what it wants from its consumers before engaging in dialogue with them. Chris Aarons, a contributor on *i Media Connection*, writes the following in his article “8 social media sins to avoid,” “It is important to fully consider your goals, objectives, and what your company is ready for before entering the social media space. This assessment will help you determine the right technologies, approaches and platforms to use based on your goals and ability to follow-through.”²⁶

Aarons also highlights the importance of a brand knowing its own capabilities; this will ensure that a brand does not set its expectations too high, and be doomed to failure before anything has even been launched. It will also encourage a brand to follow-through on its long-term strategy. In order to do this, a brand should monitor social media marketing trends and online conversations to learn what it is that consumers are looking for with regards to pharmaceutical companies and their healthcare providers. Moreover, this will help brands meet consumer expectations. These efforts will also ensure that a

²⁶ Aarons, Chris. "8 social media sins to avoid." *i Media Connection*. N.p., 31 July 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

brand is not employing social media marketing as an add-on to its existing marketing strategy. To launch a truly successful social media campaign, it must come into fruition as a legitimate component of a brand's strategy.

Valuable Content

Once a brand has outlined its objectives and goals, it must then consider *how* it is going to achieve them. A brand must determine how it can be helpful, by either making consumers' lives a little easier, or simply more interesting. A brand cannot expect consumers to congregate around its site unless there is useful and interesting content available that is specifically relevant to the audience a brand is seeking to reach. When considering this, Aarons suggests the following, "One way to ensure you avoid the pitfalls of operating social media in a silo is to ask yourself...how else can you leverage your social presence beyond just product launches and news events?"²⁶ It is essential that the content put forward by a brand serves a purpose; a brand offering patient support must offer different content to a brand interested in product development. The Web site, blog or social networking site must also have a focus. Efforts must be based on one overarching concept, from which everything else can flow.

Pharmaceutical companies should build their online communities around conditions, diseases, or more general healthcare topics, as opposed to building communities around branded products. The latter has a tendency to feel like an extension of traditional advertising, further marketing propaganda in the eyes of the consumer. If a consumer were to feel this was the case, they would be less likely to commit themselves to the community. Building communities around unbranded content is also beneficial as

it sends the message to consumers that the brand is more concerned with health and wellbeing than with selling products. Michael Maher, a contributor on *Adotas*, an interactive advertising blog, supports these views. In his article “Pharma Companies and Social Media Marketing,” Maher writes, “Focus on a disease state, not a specific product, which minimizes regulatory restrictions, and provides valuable learning’s for subsequent branded social marketing. Create disease education content (e.g., video) to establish greater corporate credibility and provide real value for patients.”³ Nonetheless, it is still important for brands to inform consumers as to who the creator or sponsor of the site actually is. This will ensure that the brand does not appear dishonest, as well as prevent consumers from feeling deceived.

Further to this, the content provided must be exclusive and offer real insight. Pharmaceutical companies have a plethora of information at their disposal, and it is important for them to start leveraging this in new ways. Consumers pay healthcare providers large sums each year to gain insight into their health and wellbeing, often to little avail. Matt McGhee, a contributor on *Small Business Search Marketing*, offers similar advice in his article “12 Tips on Creating Content for Social Media,” “Your experience and expertise in your field will probably be of interest to others in your social community. This might be in the form of posts on your own blog, guest articles on other sites, how to videos, photo galleries...and more. Giving away your knowledge sets you up as an authority, earns respect, and helps you develop an audience.”²⁷ Essentially, consumers must value the information being offered to them and believe that they would be unable to access such information elsewhere. According to Blaise Nutter, a contributor on

²⁷ McGee, Matt. "12 Tips on Creating Content for Social Media." *Small Business Search Marketing*. N.p., 6 July 2008. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

i Media Connection, consumers will remain loyal to sites that offer them information they cannot access or find elsewhere. Additionally, Nutter states that the more a consumer likes a social media space, the more likely they are to contribute to its success, either by spreading the word or by offering information of their own.²⁸

Another important element of a brand's social media space is presentation. A brand must ensure that its content is presented in the most aesthetically pleasing format. A brand's social media space must reflect a brand's image or values without appearing branded or too imposing. A brand must also take into account the specific needs of its audience. If the social media space is focused on a disease state or set of specific symptoms, then the brand must allow for this in the format of the site. The content must be clearly organized, and the site easy to navigate. If it is not, consumers will go in search of another space that encompasses such traits. Nutter reiterates this sentiment in his article, "They're (consumers) looking for good content with as little time investment as possible."²⁸ With so many social networking sites and blogs available for different purposes, consumers have to split their time accordingly. Those that are costly in terms of time and energy are not going to be visited as often as those that are easy to manage.

No matter what a brand chooses to include in its social media space, it must follow through on what it claims it will accomplish. This includes ensuring that the space serves the purpose outlined in the site's introduction or "about" section. Additionally, this means not making empty promises to consumers or members of a brands online

²⁸ Nutter, Blaise. "5 rules for marketing in niche social networks." *i Media Connection*. N.p., 31 Aug. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

community. This would only disappoint consumers, lowering their expectations of not only the site, but of the brand.

Sharing & Building Relationships

The most important aspect of social media marketing is the building of relationships or connections. It is important for pharmaceutical companies to recognize that social media marketing is inherently different from one-directional advertising, like television and print. Establishing relationships should be the reason brands want to become involved in this medium. Poorly executed social media campaigns often resemble traditional advertising, packaged in a new way. Therefore, brands entering the world of social media marketing should be ready and willing to start a two-way dialogue with consumers. In his article, “8 social media sins to avoid,” Aarons explains this further by stating, “Remember it is called ‘social’ media and thus requires you to be genuinely social to get real results.”²⁸ These brands should also be ready to *share* information with consumers, as opposed to feeding them propaganda about new products. A brand should be open to the opinions of its consumers, whether positive or negative.

The ultimate goal is to build a community – one related to the pharmaceutical company’s values and research. Aarons highlights the importance of relationships for brands in online communities, saying, “Much like in romantic relationships, the benefit of creating legitimate relationships comes from the growth and connection you develop with your significant other, which, in this case, is your audience.”²⁸ As with all relationships, trust takes time to build. Therefore, pharmaceutical companies should view their social media efforts as long-term strategy rather than sporadic stabs. By

implementing a long-term strategy, brands will be more equipped to grow their communities in size, and increase the depth of ongoing conversations.

Furthermore, if a brand wants to build relationships and increase its online presence, it must provide the tools with which to do so. In order to decipher which tools would be relevant, a brand should refer back to its purpose and goals. If a brand is interested in product development then it should provide tools for consumers to vote or comment on content. Alternatively, if a brand is concerned with consumer service and support then it should incorporate tools that allow consumers to contact brand representatives at any given time, or ensure that feedback from queries is readily available.

However, irrespective of purpose, a social media space should incorporate as many of the latest plug-ins as possible. In order to increase the user following of a social media space, the brand should employ plug-ins for the largest general market social networking sites, as well as for sites that are audience or content specific. In addition to this, brands should feature a blogroll in their social media space. A blogroll for related information is a useful tool for consumers and is also beneficial for brands; access to external sources indicates that a brand is more concerned with its consumer's wellbeing and satisfaction, than with keeping them on its site.

Be Social

Once brands have planned their online communities, they must consider the realities of how this will actually be achieved. With interesting content, insightful and meaningful dialogue should follow. It is vital that brands do not try and control

everything that is said in a social media space, as controlled conversation is neither social nor genuine. By keeping the channels of communication open, a level of trust will develop between pharmaceutical companies and consumers. Problems occur when brands are unable to lose control, and simply allow dialogue to take place unmediated. Of course, to some extent, it is necessary to steer the conversation in order to keep it on the right track. For the most part however, brands should resist the temptation to edit or censor the dialogue. With regard to this, Aaronson states, “if someone’s going to say something bad about you, odds are they already are.”²⁶ For this reason, it would be redundant for brands to try and censor all of the negative content on their sites. Moreover, it is important for brands to find a middle ground, where they are open to honest assessment, but yet have not ceded all control to consumers.

The fundamental point here is that it would be contradictory for pharmaceutical companies to be anti-social in this social sphere. Being truly engaged in social media means opening up to what consumers have to say about a brand or product, and engaging them in genuine conversation that is centered around the posted content.²⁶ By embracing the social aspect of this medium, brands will be exposed to thoughts, feelings and stories about their brand, products or services that will yield invaluable insight.

User Backlash & Plan B

Unfortunately, with regards to social media marketing, there is no guarantee for success. As with all popular media and marketing trends, social media is not immune to consumer backlash and burnout.²⁸ Social media is however, easier to manage with regard to consumer backlash, as it enables brands to communicate directly with their consumers

in order to resurrect any problems. Nonetheless, when a brand allows dialogue to flow organically, it must accept the positive with the negative. The question is, what should a brand do when the negative begins to outweigh the positive, or when the number of users begins to dwindle? The definitive answer is that all brands participating in social media marketing must have a “Plan B.”

“Plan B” should not be created when problems have already arisen, but should be part of the initial strategy. Anticipation is necessary in a fast pace environment such as social media. Inevitably, alterations may be needed, however. In terms of *when* a brand should implement its “Plan B” is at the discretion of the brand in question. This could be when a brand feels it has lost total control and the site no longer serves its purpose, or alternatively, when the content starts to damage the brand’s image. For instance, an intervention would be needed if a particular article sparked extremely negative feedback from consumers, which then appeared to continue unwarranted. In such a case, the brand would need to address the offending article and respond to the corresponding consumer feedback in an attempt to defuse the situation. The brand would then need to feature content that would guarantee positive feedback, in order to readjust the current tone of the site. Additionally, the brand should reveal a new interactive tool in order to temporarily distract users from the problem.

Twitter

Among the many social media superpowers is Twitter. Although still a relatively new platform, Twitter has demonstrated some unprecedented capabilities, which appear to be the reason for its huge success among consumers and businesses alike. According to

Nielson NetView, between February 2008 and February 2009, Twitter experienced a growth rate of 1382%, with the number of users increasing from 475, 000 to 7, 038, 000.²⁹ Much of this growth can also be attributed to Twitter's ability to cater to the needs of various consumer groups.

Twitter is a very direct means of communication, one that allows brands to target specific messages to specific consumers. As a result, it has many implications for pharmaceutical companies and their social media marketing. Some of the possibilities for pharmaceutical brands include drug and device safety alerts; prescription management, such as pharmacy refill reminders; daily healthcare advice and tips; adherence and compliance messages; enhancing health-related support groups; round the clock disease management; and patient sharing.³⁰ Moreover, according to John Mack, brands can utilize Twitter for almost any purpose, and pharmaceutical companies must endeavor to use their branded patient support twitter account for more than issuing safety alerts.³⁰

Further to this, Madhuri Shekar, a contributor on *i media connection*, has also observed Twitter's enormous capabilities. In his article, "Twitter's hidden marketing superpowers," Shekar outlines three benefits for brands engaged with Twitter, and how these benefits can be achieved.³¹ Firstly, brands can drive sales through customer

²⁹ McCarthy, Caroline. "Nielsen: Twitter's growing really, really, really, really fast." *cnet news*. N.p., 19 Mar. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

³⁰ Mack, John. "Twitter for Brands: Beyond Marketing." *Pharma Marketing Blog*. N.p., 28 Aug. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

³¹ Shekar, Madhuri. "Twitter's hidden marketing superpowers." *i Media Connection*. N.p., 2 Sept. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

engagement.³¹ By communicating openly with the consumer, brands can achieve a great deal; they can improve their image and reputation; create buzz; increase their consumer base; receive feedback on products; and most importantly, direct consumers to products and services.³¹ Secondly, a Twitter account can optimize a brand's website or blog.³¹ By integrating a brand's Twitter feed into its website, consumers are led to believe that the website is very active, influencing them to return more frequently. Thirdly, Twitter provides an effective platform for building referrals.³¹ Brands can employ word-of-mouth marketing, whereby consumers, or key influencers, are asked to "Tweet" about specific brands or products in a positive light. Additionally, brands can provide their key influencers with opportunities, discounts or other special deals related to the products or services, which would act as incentives. Essentially, there is potential for brands to build strong relationships with their consumer, and consequently, further increase their consumer base.

Furthermore, Twitter offers numerous ways for marketers to monitor and analyze trends among Twitter users. For example, "Tweetscan" makes it possible for brands to see what consumers are saying – or "Tweeting" – about a particular topic, object or person, as well as who is saying it.³² Brands can use this feature to track the buzz of a new product on the market, or anticipate how a product will be received before it even enters the market.

³² Senak, Mark. "The Increasing Utility of Twitter ." *eye on fda*. N.p., 9 Apr. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

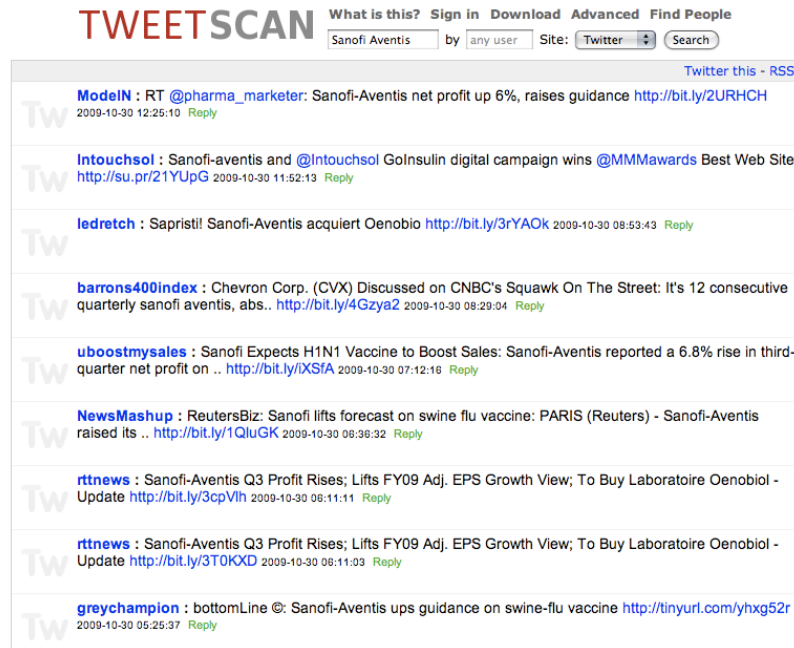


Fig. 8 - *TWEETSCAN*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Nov. 2009.
<<http://www.tweetscan.com/alerts.php>>.

Additionally, this means that brands can pinpoint and track any early adopters and key influencers. The reason it is important for brands to do this is because Twitter has an innate viral effect, allowing one consumer to potentially reach thousands of other consumers. Therefore, if a brand is able to pinpoint the consumers who “Tweet” most frequently, or most favorably with regard to that specific brand, then it can target those consumers accordingly. Essentially, brands should be following topics and consumers of importance to them, and should be using this information to plan any future strategies.

Integration & Mobility

There has been a significant shift in consumer behavior within the last two years with regard to social media. Consumers have been quick to embrace mobile access in order to better manage and enhance their social media experience. Mobile adoption rates

have soared recently, with Facebook now boasting more than 65 million mobile subscribers.³³ Furthermore, according to eMarketer, the number of mobile subscribers accessing social networks via a mobile device will grow from 243 million in 2009 to over 800 million in 2012.³⁴ James Briggs, a contributor on *i media connection*, explains why this is so significant in his article “Social minus mobile = fail;” he states, “there is growing evidence that social network users that access sites using their mobile phones are more engaged than those who do not.”³⁴ Similarly, Facebook recently reported that people who use Facebook on their mobile devices are almost 50% more active on Facebook than non-mobile users.³³

With the future of social media tied into mobile access, pharmaceutical companies must follow suit with consumers and embrace yet another social phenomenon. Integrating mobile functions into a brand’s social media space allows consumers to stay permanently connected, and communicate with ease throughout daily life. The immediacy of mobile access means that consumers can share real life experiences as they occur, while simultaneously receiving updates. There are also implications for consumers living with various medical conditions or for those who are simply health conscious. For example, with mobile applications, a person living with diabetes could potentially document their glucose readings and track them from any location. This would also allow consumers to stay connected to their source of support. Similarly, if a person begins to

³³ "Press Room." *Facebook*. N.p., 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

³⁴ Briggs, James. "Social minus mobile = fail." *i Media Connection* . N.p., 1 Sept. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

experience physical symptoms of some kind, they have the ability to access medical websites, or consult their support group.

For brands, mobile access means the ability to stay permanently connected with consumers. This means that brands have the capability to share information with consumers at their convenience. It also allows brands to monitor the lives of consumers, observing their daily routines and behavior. Given this information, brands could better plan their marketing strategies. For example, a brand involved in diabetes care could track their patients' daily behavior and suggest ways to improve it, or provide them with helpful tips to make daily life a little easier. Furthermore, a brand could develop their own mobile application, which could allow diabetics to track their daily progress, enabling them to better manage their health. With such an application, a brand could collaborate with leading pharmaceutical chains to facilitate a prescription service that would allow consumers to refill their prescriptions using their mobile device. An application such as this would help to build a relationship between brand and consumer, which could prevent consumers from switching pharmaceutical brands once a generic option became available. Again, fundamentally, mobile access allows consumers and brands to become more connected, with mutual benefits.

Niche Social Networks

Pharmaceutical companies aiming to target a more specific audience should consider niche social networking sites. These sites are incredibly important, as they have highly targeted audiences, who are particularly responsive to brands' marketing messages.²⁸ Larry Weintraub, CEO of Fanscape, believes that social networks are going

to become increasingly fragmented. In a recent interview, Weintraub commented on this trend, stating, “You’re going to see niche social networks, and then you’re going to see niche-niche social networks.”²⁸ In light of this, and given the specialized nature of pharmaceutical marketing, niche social networks should be on every brand’s social media marketing agenda.

There are currently hundreds of existing niche social networks for consumers living with specific illnesses, conditions and diseases. Many of these networks are for chronic conditions and diseases, such as diabetes, arthritis and cancer. For example, diabetics can join *TuDiabetes – A community for People Touched By Diabetes*; consumers who suffer from arthritis can join the *Arthritis Foundation Forum*; and cancer patients can join *Know Cancer Community* or *CancerMatch*. Furthermore, these social networks have the potential to provide brands with access to consumers that they could not otherwise reach, for example, online support groups for sufferers of social phobia, an anxiety disorder. With a condition such as this, a support group could only exist online, giving brands access to consumers who would be otherwise inaccessible.

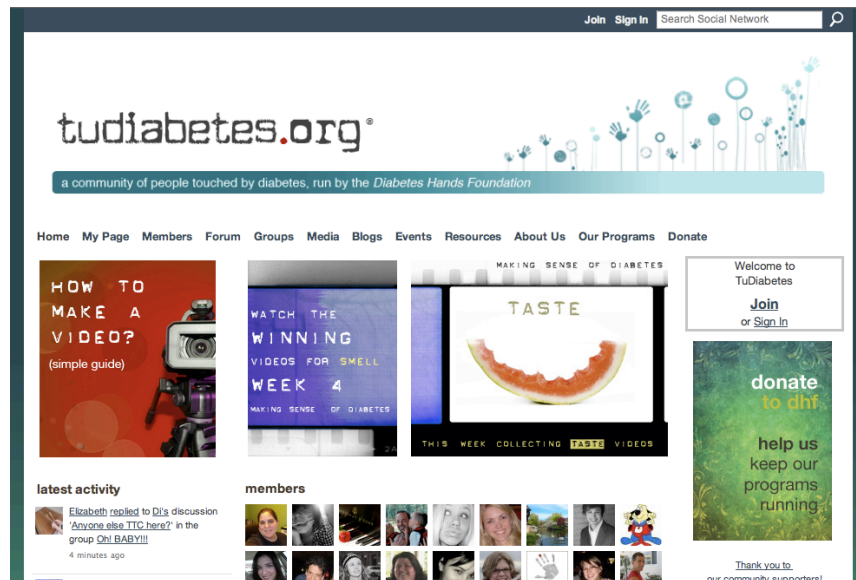


Fig. 9 - *tudabetes.org*. Diabetes Hands Foundation, 2009. Web. 14 Nov. 2009.
<<http://tudabetes.com/>>.

With regard to how brands should establish a presence in niche social media, there are two options to consider; joining and collaborating with an existing niche network, or creating a new one. By joining an existing network, brands would be able to eliminate a great deal of groundwork, as there would already be an active consumer base. This would allow the brand more time and money for developing creative strategies and new content. Furthermore, by collaborating with existing niche networks, a brand can make it appear as though it cares enough about the cause that it is willing to collaborate for the greater good. Alternatively, a brand can create its own niche network. This would allow a brand to tailor every component from scratch, giving the brand total control. However, brands must carefully consider the time and budgetary needs of creating a successful social network from scratch. Whether brands choose to join an existing niche social network, or build their own is irrelevant, however. The crucial point is that brands simply become involved in niche social networks. Also commenting on this trend is

Nutter, who states, “Odds are, if you can dream it, there’s an online network of people out there who are into it...somewhere out there, people are talking about your brand – and you’d better find them.”²⁸

Measuring Success

When measuring social media, brands should group their efforts into three components; traffic, brand metrics, and return on investment. This will allow brands to view and track their efforts from multiple perspectives, providing an overview of their campaign’s success.

With regard to traffic, brands should examine three different aspects; the number of users, the quality of interaction among users, and the level of user retention.³⁵ In terms of the number of users, brands should track page views, unique visitors, members, user posts, number of groups or forums, and contributors.³⁶ Brands should also track the frequency of user visits to their social media sites. This should provide brands with some indication as to how invested their consumers are in their social media space.

Similarly, it is vital that brands observe the quality of interaction among users, as a constructive and engaged user will contribute more to the social media site. When tracking this, brands should observe user generated content, referrals, completed profiles, user connections, reviews, and votes. Tracking the quality of interaction will also allow

³⁵ Lake, Chris. "10 ways to measure social media success." *Econsultancy*. N.p., 5 Mar. 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

³⁶ "SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS." *The Social Organization*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

brands to assess users' attitude and see how well their campaigns have been received. In turn, this will allow brands to track additional metrics. By observing consumer interaction, pharmaceutical companies can measure their brand awareness, attitude, recall, image, and favorability. Again, in turn, this should be an indication of brands' ability to sustain a social media campaign long-term.

In addition to traffic and quality of user interaction, brands should observe their rate of user retention. This is necessary because one of the key elements of social media is the building of long-term relationships. Therefore, the rate of retention should indicate how successful a brand has been in engaging with the consumer.

With regard to return on investment, brands should consider measuring three different components; marketing and sales, consumer support; and research and development. However, brands should not necessarily observe all three, but instead the ones that are relevant to their specific purpose and goals. When measuring marketing and sales, brands should take the following into consideration; number of sales leads; cost per number of sales leads; number of sales; time to qualified lead; mean revenue per consumer; and consumers' lifetime value.³⁶ In terms of consumer support, brands should observe the number of consumer queries, the rate of consumer satisfaction, and the cost of support per consumer. With regard to research and development, brands should observe the number of new ideas generated, the rate of idea fruition, as well as the revenue or adoption rate of these new ideas from the community versus those from traditional sources.³⁶

Evolution, Not Revolution

Pharmaceutical companies should expect their social media marketing efforts to be an evolutionary process, as opposed to a revolutionary one. By allowing a site to grow organically, consumers will feel less forced, and more led, into participating with the brand. Consumers will also feel that there is a less of an agenda on the part of the brand and as a result, will feel more open to genuine interaction. In light of this, brands should develop their social media spaces anticipating long-term growth.

In order to better facilitate this evolutionary process, brands should continue to add new content and interactive features to their social media spaces at regular intervals. This will encourage consumers to return to the site frequently, and prevent them from growing bored with the content. If consumers are exposed to a lot of new content all at once, there is little for them to look forward to in the near future. Lisa Roner, a contributor on *eye for pharma*, reiterates this sentiment in her article, "Making e-marketing more than just an add-on," by saying, "It all comes down to long-term strategy, rather than quick wins... you want them to have a sense that if they unsubscribe, they might miss something important."³⁷ Additionally, users need time to become familiarized with a site's various functions. By adding new features gradually, users have time to gain confidence with the site, making them more likely to return.

³⁷ Roner, Lisa. " Making e-marketing more than just an add-on." *eye for pharma*. N.p., 28 July 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

Creating a New Media Campaign: Vytorin

Vytorin, a prescription drug, is used to treat the two sources of cholesterol. Produced by Merck/Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals, Vytorin helps block the absorption of cholesterol from food, and reduces the cholesterol made naturally by the body.³⁸ Although Vytorin was released in 2004, Merck has yet to establish an online presence for the drug beyond a one-dimensional website. Due to the chronic nature of cholesterol health, Vytorin provides Merck with an opportunity to expand into a range of social media. Using Vytorin as an example, the building blocks previously observed have been put into practice in order to demonstrate how an exemplary social media campaign could be developed.



Fig. 10 - Weblog post. *Chemistry World Blog*. N.p., 1 Aug. 2008. Web. 14 Nov. 2009. <<http://prospect.rsc.org/blogs/cw/?m=200808&paged=3>>.

Vytorin could build a social networking site for people suffering from high cholesterol. The purpose of this social networking site would be to assist those suffering

³⁸ "The 2 Sources of Cholesterol ." *Vytorin*. Merck/Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals , 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

from high cholesterol in the management of their cholesterol health. The initial primary objectives would be to build a community around this shared interest, and to gain insight into the lifestyles and practices of those suffering from high cholesterol. This insight would provide the brand with a base of information, which it could use to further develop the site and expand into other social media strategies. The brand could also use such information in product research and development.

The main focus of this site would be an online tracker and diary that would allow users to record their cholesterol levels, as well as goals. This tracker would also serve as a food diary and exercise log so that users could monitor their nutrition and fitness. The reason for this is that healthcare professionals have cited diet and exercise as the two primary ways for people to lower their cholesterol levels and manage their overall health.³⁹ This combination would also allow users to observe any correlations between their nutrition, fitness and cholesterol levels. Additionally, the site would boast a built-in weight tracker. This would allow users to better manage their weight, and observe any correlation between this and their cholesterol levels.

Further to this, users would be able to earn bonus points with their online tracker. Points would be accredited to users when they report a decrease in poor cholesterol levels or weight. Points would also be accredited to users when they consistently log exercise and a healthy diet. Users would redeem their points for coupons towards Vytorin. This would help to discourage users from switching to the generic brand, Ezetimibe. Users who do not take Vytorin are however, under no obligation to redeem their points in this

³⁹ "Diet, Exercise, and VYTORIN." *Vytorin*. Merck/Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals, 2009. Web. 11 Nov. 2009.

way. The points system would serve as the only component on the site that is connected to the Vyturin brand. This would ensure that branding does not become an invasive force on the site, and allow users to enjoy the site without being disturbed by obvious marketing messages.

In addition to this, the site would incorporate a progress tracker in the form of a chart. The chart would plot users' cholesterol levels and weight, as well as their relative goals. This would provide users with an overview of their own progress, encouraging them to stay focused and committed to their long-term goals. Further to this, the site should have a mobile device application for the tracking e-tools so that users can record their food intake and exercise throughout the day. This would mean that users could incorporate the site into their daily routine, further motivating them to remain on track.

The Home page for the site would feature specific topics related to cholesterol health. The featured topic or issue should be changed every two weeks in order to ensure that the site is providing users with fresh content. On this page, the brand should provide users with information and external resources pertaining to the chosen topic, as well as allow users to post relevant information or comment on content shared by others. Further to this, the Home page should incorporate a bi-weekly quiz that is tailored to the featured topic. This would encourage users to observe the site's content carefully. Additionally, users would be able to earn bonus points by achieving high scores on the bi-weekly quiz.

In addition to the tracker and Home page, the site would incorporate numerous other elements. These would include Cholesterol 101, News, Nutrition, Fitness, My Meds, and My Doc. Cholesterol 101 would include basic information regarding

cholesterol, for example, what it is and how to control it. This component should also include a cholesterol tutorial in the form of a video. This would provide users with a more personal experience, making them more likely to remember the information.

With regard to the News component, the site should provide users with up-to-date information on all topics relevant to cholesterol health, and effective management of it. Essentially, this component would serve as a company blog where information could be presented in the form of broadcast news updates, human-interest stories, and interviews with healthcare specialists, or new research studies. Providing relevant and up-to-date information will further educate users, making them more accountable for their own health. Potentially, this would encourage users to take control, motivating them to become more proactive in the management on their cholesterol health.

With regard to the Nutrition component, the site would include both general and specific information. In terms of general content, the site would provide food and nutrition guidelines, pertaining to cholesterol health. This would include daily food recommendations and weight-loss advice. In terms of specific content, Nutrition would include a “how to” component, explaining how various foods should be prepared and cooked for optimum cholesterol health. This would be in the form of both text and videos. There would also be weekly food menus for users to follow to ensure that they do not grow bored with their diet and stray off course. Furthermore, this section of the site would feature “My Foods,” allowing users to upload their own menus, articles, advice, and cooking videos.

Similarly, the Fitness section should comprise both brand-produced content, and user-generated content. The brand-produced content would outline exercise guidelines for various user demographics, as well as daily recommendations pertaining to various degrees of cholesterol health. This section would also provide instructional exercise videos, relevant to all levels of fitness. In terms of user-generated content, users would be able to contribute their own fitness advice, and comment on the shared content.

The Discussion section, in contrast, would be a completely user-generated component. However, the brand would still need to monitor all activity and intercept if needed. Here, users would be able to connect with others and discuss various topics, issues, products, or concerns they may have, relevant to the management of cholesterol health. The Discussion section should serve as a useful tool for Vytorin; the brand should be able to gather information from user discussions to use in the research and development of its product marketing. The brand should also be able to use this information to further develop and improve the site.

The last component of the site is My Doc, which would be used to provide users with information on how to effectively communicate with their doctors regarding cholesterol health. My Doc would include a list of questions users should ask their healthcare providers. Furthermore, My Doc would include a sub-section called My Doctor Diary. This application would allow users to log any future doctor appointments, as well as make notes about what was discussed at any relevant appointment. Potentially, this could include diet and medication regimens, or long-term goals.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the growing need for social media marketing in the pharmaceutical industry. Social media usage among consumers is increasing rapidly and consumers expect brands to have a presence in this new social sphere. Similarly, as more brands begin to employ social media as part of their marketing strategy, brands that do not will be left behind. Much of the reason for this is that traditional media is unable to build consumer loyalty to the same extent as social media, when the latter is successfully crafted. Although there are obstacles facing pharmaceutical companies in terms of FDA laws and regulations and the use of social media marketing, brands must persevere, as they otherwise run the risk of losing consumers to generic brands.

As demonstrated, however, pharmaceutical companies cannot delve into social media marketing blindly. As with traditional media, social media can be executed poorly and thus, damage a brand's image. Therefore, there are a range of elements that brands must take into consideration in order to achieve desired results. As discussed, these include a brand's purpose and goals; social media content; how to build relationships with consumers; a brand's sociability; handling user backlash; large and niche networks; integration and mobility of social media tools; and measuring progress and results. Although there is no formula for absolute success, these elements will ensure that brands have taken the necessary steps to achieve their goals.

To date, the landscape of pharmaceutical marketing has been overrun by advertisements that feature slapstick comedy or clichéd stereotypes. Many of these marketing efforts appear to be out of date, and out of touch with consumers, which is

ironic given the innovative and somewhat visionary nature of the pharmaceutical industry. As these brands transition into direct-to-consumer marketing, they must also explore new ways to connect and engage with consumers. Social media could prove paramount in this venture, thrusting pharmaceutical marketing into the future.

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VITA

Rhonda Nancy Taylor was born and raised in Hong Kong, where she attended South Island School. From 2004 to 2007 she attended the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom where she earned her Bachelor of Arts with Honors in American Studies. During the spring of 2006, she participated in a study abroad program at Arizona State University. Upon completion of her degree, she worked at a publishing company in Hong Kong for a year. In August 2008, she entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at Austin.

Contact information: Rhonda.taylor@mail.utexas.edu

This professional report was typed by the author.